

Ski Jump from Jim Caughran, caughranjim@gmail.com. VirtualPaper #1.

Ski jumping, a winter Olympics event, is a combination of style, aerodynamics, courage, outside factors such as wind, probably many other things. Its practitioners are almost all teenagers, willing to float in the air far higher than most of us would find comfortable.



Telemark skis are heavy cross country skis. They have toe bindings and the heel is loose. They're often used for back-country skiing. Ski jumping skis are broader than other telemark skis, for lift.

A jumper slides down a ramp and tries to get as much speed as possible for the lift-off. At the end of the ramp, the skier jumps into the air and assumes a position with aerodynamic lift. Hiser body leans far forward, skis make a V with tips apart, and the body remains as still as possible.



At the end, when the ground is approaching fast, the jumper assumes the telemark position and descends under control. The telemark position is one knee forward, the rear leg bent and the rear ski on the ground (or soon will be). The landing area is steep, allowing skiers to slow down gradually rather than with a thump.

In the 1980s (my 40s), I did a lot of cross country skiing. I enjoyed exercising outside, my (limited) competence on skis, and the woods I would ski through. I was interested in the nordic sports, and learned something about various forms. I tried downhill skiing on telemark skis, eventually getting the right push to turn in telemark position. It improved my cross country form considerably; the snowplow, telemark and parallel turns have a lot in common.

My telemark instructors, Steve and Holly, would hold one or two telemark days in a winter. Various lessons in skiing filled the day. On one telemark day, one of the workshops was ski jumping. I thought that was a great idea.



The jump instructor, someone from Ski Canada, showed skills through downhill skiing with bumps. Finally, we were introduced to a small jumping hill the instructor had created. The lift-off platform was made of packed snow. The other components are the ramp and landing area.

It was fun! Something like what flying must be, without tired arms. I did several runs, climbing the hill, sliding down, jumping.

After one run, Holly commented that my form was good, and she was impressed. One would think that such an endorsement would encourage me to do much more. But I was tired; my conditioning was not what it should have been. So I sat at the side, rested on my laurels and watched others jumping.

Alas, last time I tried skiing, I couldn't get up after falling down. One more reason not to get old.